



Written testimony submitted to the Education Committee on S.B. 948, An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut

March 3, 2021

Co-Chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez, Ranking Members Senator Berthel and Representative McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

I am Pastor Jeremy Williams and I lead Phillips Metropolitan Church in Hartford's north end. I am also the board chair and co-founder of FaithActs for Education, a statewide organization consisting of pastors and other people of faith committed to making sure Connecticut children get the education they deserve.

I am here to urge you to support S.B. 948, An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut.

If life is anything, it's a journey. My journey began in Hunstville, Alabama, where I was born and raised. Rocket City, USA. In the heart of the deep south. The state once ruled by Sheriff Jim Clark, Bull Connor and George Wallace -- names that evoke the full range of emotions in Black and Brown people.

These are the names that will forever scream racism, and signify utter disregard for the humanity and equality of Black and Brown people.

As we have seen so often in recent years, and most dramatically in 2020, America has not sufficiently addressed the issue of race.

My time as a young man in the south and then in my ministry in the Northeast, I see racism manifest itself in eerily similar and yet different ways.

In the years shortly before my birth, we saw racism expressed through high-pressure fire hoses, snarling attack dogs, and beatings on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The oppression was televised.

But in Connecticut, the racism is not televised. It's codified.

Codified through a school funding formula that discriminates against low-income Black and Brown children, against English Language Learners and children in schools of choice.

Not only is the racism codified in Connecticut, it's camouflaged in complicated funding formulas and dense bureaucratic notions like weighted averages and statutory definitions of "concentrated poverty" that somehow do not include our poorest cities.



And with this insidious codification and deceitful camouflage, Black and Brown children are told to be patient. That their funding will come, someday.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you'd tried to tell people that about the coronavirus vaccine you'd be greeted with unprecedented public anger. And rightfully so.

You see, in Hartford, the average income is \$20,000. In Greenwich, the average income is \$100,000. And this isn't a coincidence, this is by design. And the education system in the deep south that my mother fervently fought to get me to Yale and Harvard, is the same education system that a Hartford mother fights daily for her child to get an ounce of what he would in Greenwich.

When you fund education based on property taxes, draw lines to keep Black and Brown people out of districts with the best resources, allow the state to spend \$640 million more on privileged white students, you have to ask yourself, how far away are you from whites-only drinking fountains and segregated lunch counters?

Today, we're asking you to respond. End our state's racist and classist education funding system.

Make Connecticut a more just and equitable place to live.

Please vote "Yes" on S.B. 948 and support its passage in the General Assembly so that our state's budget reflects the values of justice and equity in education.

Pastor Jeremy L Williams
266 Pearl Street #607
Hartford, CT 06103

Phillips Metropolitan CME Church
2500 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06120

FaithActs for Education
857 Post Road, Suite 310
Fairfield, CT 06824